

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to stress the importance of American leadership in ending the crisis in South Sudan. Since violent clashes erupted on December 15, 2013, an estimated 740,000 people have been displaced, 85,157 remain sheltered at eight different UN bases around the country, and thousands more have died.

We appreciate your leadership and are grateful for the wide-ranging senior-level engagement you have shown since the conflict began. Presidential statements and a consistent on the ground presence in Juba and Addis Ababa during the initial ceasefire negotiations were an important signal to the people and the government of South Sudan. Such a consistent presence will be equally important as the political talks continue. Nonetheless, we remain concerned that despite the recent signing of a Cessation of Hostilities and the Agreement on the Status of Detainees, the country remains on the brink and welcome your corresponding statement of February 8th. However, we believe that a core component of U.S. strategy must be to not only ensure reconciliation but also accountability for the grave crimes that have been committed. We believe this is the only way to move the country forward and stop the cycle of violence.

In your statement welcoming the agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, you noted that the South Sudanese Government has “an obligation to ensure that the lives of their people and future of their young country are not further marred by continued violence and that individuals who have committed atrocities are held to account.” Similarly, the African Union summarized its intention to proceed with an African-led commission of inquiry that aims “to address the plight of the victims of human rights violations and to assist the Government and people of South Sudan to identify the elements that are needed to strengthen the institutions of their young nation.” It is necessary that both of these abstract commitments translate into an independent and impartial inquiry that identifies alleged perpetrators and paves the way for fair, credible trials on these most grave crimes.

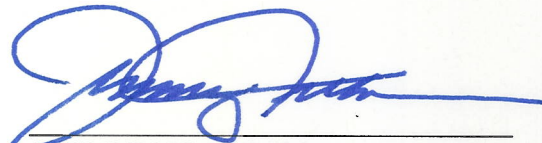
We look forward to hearing from you on how the Administration will address accountability of human rights violations perpetrated in South Sudan. We are specifically interested in learning how your Administration will support the African Union as it develops its commission of inquiry for South Sudan in collaboration with regional and UN bodies. We are also interested to know if the Administration plans to support other UN or international community initiatives that would ensure accountability in South Sudan, including encouraging public reporting by the UN Mission in South Sudan and a public release of any reporting from the African Union investigation.

The United States has a long and proud history of supporting accountability for human rights violations around the globe, and the heinous crimes perpetrated in South Sudan should be no exception.

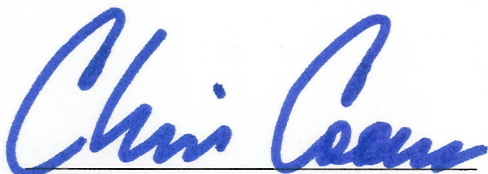
Sincerely,



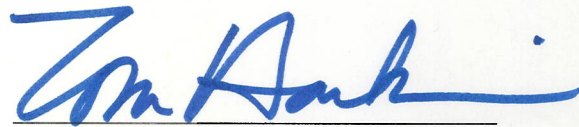
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



JOHNNY ISAKSON
United States Senator



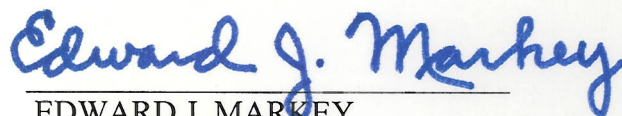
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senator



TOM HARKIN
United States Senator



KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator



AL FRANKEN
United States Senator